



**20 Years as the Voice for Health Care Consumers**

1982  
2002

June 13, 2002

Congressman John Dingell  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
564 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Dingell:

We congratulate you and Congressman Rangel on the introduction of your bill, "The Medicare Rx Benefit and Discount Act," which provides a prescription drug benefit for Medicare beneficiaries.

This is an issue of utmost importance to all Americans who need prescription drugs, especially to seniors and people with disabilities. As you well know, seniors' ability to afford prescription drugs is a particularly difficult problem today. In our 2001 report entitled, "Enough to Make You Sick: Prescription Drug Prices for the Elderly," we concluded that the 50 top drugs used by seniors rose 2.3 times the rate of inflation between 2000 and 2001. We are in the process of updating this report for last year, and our preliminary data shows that this devastating rate of price increases continues. Millions of seniors have limited income and no, or limited, drug coverage and will find themselves deciding whether to buy drugs or to pay for other essentials.

Your bill addresses many of the issues we care about. Beneficiaries will be very grateful that the benefit is the same as in the rest of Medicare, in that the beneficiary only pays 20 percent of the cost of the drug. Additionally, every Medicare beneficiary can benefit from this comprehensive benefit. Beneficiaries across the country will be confident that they will have access to this benefit in the same way they get the rest of their Medicare benefits. Low-income people get extra assistance. Also, there are provisions to assure that costs will be contained and quality maintained.

Please let us know how we can assist you to move this bill toward enactment so that all Medicare beneficiaries can have access to the prescription drugs they need.

Sincerely,

Ronald F. Pollack  
Executive Director